

Message Text

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ACTION ACDA-10

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INFO US MISSION NATO 2598

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, NATO, IT

SUBJECT: MBFR: FLANK SECURITY, ITALIAN VIEWS

REFS: A) USNATO 1626; B) STATE 64633; C) STATE 62411;

D) USNATO 1483

1. IN DISCUSSION WITH NITTI OF MFA DISARMAMENT OFFICE, EMBOFFS LEARNED THAT ITALIANS SOMEWHAT PUZZLED BY APPARENT HASTE TO SETTLE FLANK SECURITY ISSUE AND MORE PUZZLED AS TO U.S. ATTRACTION TO BELGIAN PROPOSAL.

2. ON SURFACE IT APPEARS THAT ITALIAN GOAL IS TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM CONSTRAINT ON PACT REDEPLOYMENTS - ESPECIALLY TO HUNGARY. ACCORDING TO NITTI, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ALIED CONSENSUS THAT CLEAR CONSTRAINT ON PACT HAD HIGHER PRIORITY THAN DID PRESERVATION OF ALLIED FLEXIBILITY. THEY FEEL PRECISION OF ITALIAN PROPOSAL WOULD PREVENT THE SOVIETS FROM DEFENDING THEIR REDEPLOYMENTS, FOR EXAMPLE TO HUNGARY, AS BEING PEACEFUL AND PERMISSIBLE, WHILE THEY WERE SIMULTANEOUSLY CRITICIZING ALLIED

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REDEPLOYMENTS TO ITALY OR NORWAY AS IN VIOLATION OF SPIRIT OF

AGREEMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, NITTI EXPRESSED FEAR THAT VAGUE BELGIAN LANGUAGE COULD BE SUCCESSFULLY TWISTED BY SOVIETS TO MOBILIZE WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST ALLIED REDEPLOYMENT WHILE RATIONALIZING INTRA-PACT DEPLOYMENTS.

3. HE OBSERVED THAT CRITICISM OF NEGOTIABILITY OF ITALIAN LANGUAGE WAS PERHAPS WELL FOUNDED BUT QUESTIONED WHETHER WEST SHOULD CONCEDE DESIDERATA WITHOUT EFFORT. IN ANY EVENT, HE DID NOT THINK RAPID PROGRESS ON THIS ISSUE WAS NEEDED AS MBFR TALKS WOULD STAY ON BACK BURNER UNTIL CSCE CONCLUDED.

4. EMBOFFS POINTED OUT THAT GOI MIGHT BE FOCUSING TOO MUCH ON JUST ONE SIDE OF THE COIN. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT IT MIGHT BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE ALLIES TO PRESERVE SOME FLEXIBILITY ON REDEPLOYMENTS ALSO. EXAMPLE PRESENTED OF DESIRABILITY OF NOT FORECLOSING ALL FUTURE REDEPLOYMENTS IN FRANCE.

5. NITTI RESPONDED THAT GOI WAS NOT IRREVOCABLY COMMITTED TO ITS PROPOSAL AND WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE ALLIES WEIGH THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE ALTERNATE VERSIONS. IF GOOD CASE COULD BE MADE FOR PRESERVING FLEXIBILITY THEY WOULD BE READY TO ADJUST THEIR POSITION.

6. IT IS EMBASSY'S VIEW THAT ITALIANS' MAIN DESIRE AT THIS STAGE IS THAT THEIR PLAN RECEIVE A FULL HEARING AS A SERIOUS PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD BY ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL NATO ALLIES. THEY MIGHT BE ESPECIALLY RECEPTIVE TO ARGUMENTS CONCERNING DANGER OF FORECLOSING FUTURE DEFENSE COOPERATION WITH FRANCE. THEY ARE OPERATING ON THEORY THAT NO COMMITMENTS WOULD BE BINDING ON FRANCE AS A NON-PARTICIPANT. THEY HAD PRESUMED THAT THEIR CONTIGUOUS AREA PROPOSAL COULD, THEREFORE, IN NO WAY INCLUDE FRANCE. IF THE RESULTING CONSTRAINT WERE UPON THE MBFR PARTICIPANT MAKING THE REDEPLOYMENT RATHER THAN UPON THE STATE TO WHICH THE REDEPLOYMENT IS MADE, THEN THE ITALIANS WOULD ACCEPT CONCLUSION THAT THEORETICAL ALLIED REDEPLOYMENT TO FRANCE WOULD BE PRECLUDED.

7. ITALIANS WOULD ALSO PROBABLY BE RECEPTIVE TO HAVING A MODIFIED VERSION OF THEIR PROPOSAL USED AS A FIRST OFFER BY WEST WITH AGREEMENT TO FALL BACK TO SOMETHING LIKE THE BELGIAN

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PROPOSAL IN THE EVENT THAT REACTION WAS UTTERLY NEGATIVE. BEAUDRY

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